The Voice of the Pack

By EDISON MARSHALL

CHAPTER III-Continued.

-11-It is extremely doubtful if a plainsman would have possessed this knowledge. But a plainsman has not the knowledge of life itself that the mountaineer has, simply because he does not see it in the raw. And he has not half the intimate knowledge of death, an absolute regulatte of self-composure. The mountaineer knows life in its simple phases with little tradition or convention to blur the vision. Death is a very intimate acquaintance that may be met in any snowdrift, on any rocky trail; and these conditions are very deadly to any delusions that he has in regard to himself. He acquires an ability to see just where he stands, and of course that means selfpossession. This quality had something to do with the remarkable record that the mountain men, such as that magnificent warrior from Tennessee, made

in the late war. Cranston knew exactly what Snowbird would do. Although of a higher order, she was a mountain creature, even as himself. She meant exactly what she said. If he hadn't climbed from Dan's prone body, she would have shot quickly and very straight. If he tried to attack either of them now, her finger would press back before he could blink an eye, and she wouldn't weep any hysterical tears over his dend body. If he kept his distance, she wouldn't shoot at all. He meant to keep his distance. But he did know that he could insult her without danger to himself. And by now als lips had acquired their old curi of scorn.

"I'll go, Snowbird," he said. "I'll leave you with your sissy. But I guess you saw what I did to him-in two

"I saw. But you must remember he's sick." Now go."

"If he's sick, let him stay in bedand have a wet nurse. Maybe you can

be that.' The lids drooped halfway over her gray eyes, and the slim finger curied more tightly about the trigger. "Oh, I wish I could shoot you, Bert!" she

said. She didn't whisper it, or hiss it, or hurl it, or do any of the things most people are supposed to do in moments of violent emotion. She simply said it, and her meaning was all the clearer.

"But you can't. And I'll pound that milk-sop of yours to a jelly every time I see him. I'd think, Snowbird, that you'd want a man."

He started up the traff; and then she did a strange thing. "He's more of a man than you are, right new, Bert." she told him. "He'll prove it some day." Then her arm went about Dan's neck and lifted his head upon her breast; and in Cranston's plain sight, she bent and kissed him, softly, on the line.

Cranston's answer was an oath. It dripped from his lips, more poisonous, more malicious than the venom of a His features seemed to tighten, the dark lips drew away from his teeth. No words could have made him such an effective answer as this little action of hers. And as he turned up the trail, he called down to her name-that most dreadful epithet that foul tongues have always used to women held in greatest scorn,

Dan struggied in her arms. The kiss on his lips, the instant before, had not called him out of his haifconsciousness. It had scarcely seemed real, rather just an incident in a blissful dream. But the word called down the trail shot out clear and vivid from the silence, just as a physician's face will often leap from the darkness after the anesthesia. Something infinitely warm and tender was holding him, pressing him back against a holy place that throbbed and gave him life and strength; but he knew that this word had to be answered. And only actions, not other words, could be its payment. All the voices of his body called to him to lie still, but the voices of the spirit, those higher, nobler promptings from which no man, to the glory of the breed from which he sprung, can ever quite escape, were stronger yet. He tugged upward, straining. But he didn't even have the strength to break the hold that the soft arm had about his neck

"Oh, if I could only pull the trigshe was crying. "If I could only kill him-"

"Let me," he pleaded, "Give me the pistol. I'll kill him-"

And he would. There was no flinching in the gray eyes that looked up to her. She leaned forward, as if to put the weapon in his hands, but at once drew it back. And then a single sob eaught at her throat. An instant !

later they heard Cranston's laughter as he vanished around the turn of the

For long minutes the two of them were still. The girl still held the man's head upon her breast. The pistol had fallen in the pine needles, and her nervous hand plucked strangely at the leaves of a mountain flower. To Dan's eyes, there was something trancelike, hint of paralysis and insensibility about her posture. He had never seen her eyes like this. The light that he had always beheld in them had vanished. Their utter darkness startled

He sat up straight, and her arm that had been about his neck felt at her side. He took her hand firmly in his. and their eyes met.

"We must go home, Snowbird," he told her simply. "I'm not so badly hurt but that I can make it."

She nodded; but otherwise scarcely seemed to hear. Her eyes still flowed with darkness. And then, before his own eyes, their dark pupils began to contract. The hand he held filled and throbbed with life, and the fingers closed around his. She leaned toward

"Listen, Dan," she said quickly. "You heard-didn't you-the last thing that he said?"

"I couldn't help but hear, Snowbird."

Her other hand sought for his. "Then if you heard-payment must be made. You see what I mean, Dan, Maybe you can't see, knowing the girls that live on the plains. You were the cause of his saying it, and you must

It seemer to Dan that some stern code of the hills, unwritten except in the hearts of their children, inexorable as night, was speaking through her tips. This was no personal thing. In



"I Guess You Saw What I Did to Him."

some dim, half-understood way, went back to the basic code of life.

"People must fight their own fights, up here," she told him, "The laws of the courts that the plains people can appeal to are all too far away. There's no one that can do it, except you. Not my father. My father can't fight your battles here, if your honor is going to stand, It's up to you, Dan, You can't pretend that you didn't hear him. Such as you are, weak and sick to be heaten to a pulp in two minutes. you alone will have to make him answer for it. I came to your ald-and

now you must come to mine." Her fingers no longer clasped his. Strength had come back to him, and his fingers closed down until the blood went out of hers, but she was wholly unconscious of the pain. In reality, she was conscious of nothing except the growing flame in his face. It held her eyes in passionate fascination. His pupils were contracting to little bright dots in the gray irises. The jaw was setting, as she had never seen it be-

"Do you think, Snowbird, that you'd even have to ask me?" he demanded. "Don't you think I understand? And it won't be in your defense-only my own duty."

"But he is so strong-and you are

so weak-" "I won't be so weak forever. I nev-

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er really cared much about living before. I'll try now, and you'll ace oh, Snowbled, walt and trust me; I understand everything. It's my own fight-when you kissed me, and re cried down that word in anger and jenlousy, it put the whole thing on me. No one else can make him answer; no one else has the right. It's my honor,

no one else's, that stands or falls."

He lifted her hand to his lips and issed it again and again.

And for the first time he saw the tears gathering in her dark eyes. "But you fought here, didn't you, Dan?" he asked with painful slowness. "You didn't put up your arms or try to run away? I didn't come till he had you done, so I didn't see." She looked at him as if her whole jey of life hung

"Fought! I would have fought till I died! But that isn't enough, Snow-bird. It isn't enough just to fight, in a case like this. A man's got to win! I would have died if you hadn't come. And that's another debt that I have

to pay-only that debt I owe to you." She podded slowly. The lives of the mountain men are not saved by their women without incurring obliga-She attempted no barren de-She made no effort to pretend he had not incurred a tremendous debt when she had come with her pistol. It was an unavoidable fact. A life for a life is the code of the mountains,

"Two things I must do before I can ever dare to die," he told her soberly, "One of them is to pay you; the other is to pay Cranston for the thing he Maybe the chance will never come for the first of the two; only I'll pray that it will. Maybe it would be kinder to you to pray that it wouldn't; yet I pray that it will! Maybe I can pay that debt only by being always ready, always watching for a chance to save you from any danger, always trying to protect you. You didn't come in time to see the fight a made. Besides-I jost, and little else mat-ters. And that debt to you can't be paid until sometime I fight again-for you—and win." He gasped from his weakness, but went on brakely. "I'll never be able to feel at peace, Snow-bird, until I'm tested in the fire before your eyes! I want to show you the things Cranston said of me are not true-that my courage will stand the

"It wouldn't be the same, perhaps, with an Eastern girl. Other things matter in the valleys. But I see how it is here; that there is only one standard for men and by that standard they rise or fall. Things in the mountains are down to the essen-

He paused and struggled for strength to continue. "And I know what you said to him," he went on. Half-unconscious as I was, I remember every word. Each word just seems to burn into me, Snowbird, and I'll make every one of them good. You said I am a better man than he, and sometime it would be proved-and it's the truth! Maybe in a month, maybe in a year. I'm not going to die from this malady of mine now, Snowbird. I've got too much to live for-too many debts to pay. In the end. I'll prove your words to him."

His eyes grew earnest, and the hard fire went out of them. "It's almost as if you were a queen, a real queen of some great kingdom," he told her, tremulous with a great awe that was stealing over him, as a mist steals over | probable extent.

your angers for ever and ever I was just subject, living only to light your lights—maybe with a driently in the end to kies your fingers again. When you bent and kissed use on that bill-lide—for him to see—it was the same: that I was sworn to you, and nothing mattered in my life except the service mattered in my life except the service and love I could give you. And it's more than you ever dream, Snowhird. It's all yours, for your battles and your happiness."

The great pines were silent above them, shadowed and dark. Perhaps they were listening to an age-old story, those yows of service and self-gained worth by which the race has strugged upward from the darkness. But I kissed you-once before,"

she reminded him. The voice was Just a whisper, hardly louder than the site of the leaves in the wind. "But that lites didn't count," he told

her. "It wasn't at all the same. I loved you then. I think, but it didn't mean what it did today."

"And what—" she leaned toward.

him, her eyes full on his, "does it

"All that's worth while in life, all that matters when everything is said that can be said, and all is done that can be done. And it means, please God, when the debts are paid, that I "Not until then," she told him,

whispering. "Until then, I make outh that I won't even ask it, or receive it if you

should give it. It goes too deep, dear-est-and it means too much." This was their pact. Not until the debts were paid and her word made good would those lips be his again. There was no need for further words.

Both of them knew. In the skies, the gray clouds were gathering swiftly, as always in the mountains. The raindrops were falling one and one, over the forest, The summer was done, and fall had come in carnest,

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Beggar" Not in Heorew. One of the proverbs of the old Jews was, "Whoever brings up a child without a trade brings him up to steal." However high a family was in social position, it was the habit of the Jews to teach every boy to know a trade, as he might see the day when it would be pecessary for him to labor with his It was sought to give every man the capacity to take care of him self, so that there should be no poor people in the land. So successfully was this policy carried out that it has been said that the word began does not exist in the Hebrew tongue. Hear that, Ireland! Hear that, Italy! And all this sprang, not from climate or condition, but from the application of the Mosaic economy to the education of the people.—Henry Ward Beecher.

Age of the World.

The reckoning of time among all na tions reaches back to practically the same period. Chinese, Indians and Egytians all assume that the earth was 80,000 years old before it could have assumed the state in which it is now. The oldest book of Chinese annals does not commence its historical record from an earlier time than that of the Trojan war. Neither do the Indians carry back their historical age more than 5,000 years. According to scriptural chronology, in that way of reckoning it, which appears the most prohable to most historians, almost 8,000 years may be added to the Indians' computation.

Ancient History.

Ancient history begins with the first recorded history and extends to the fall of the Roman empire, 478 A. D., including all the historical events included in the Bible. The prehistoric period is the period about which nothing is known, either from the Bible or other sources. It has no limits, and scientists, historians and archagists give varying opinions as to its

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